

HLF raises funds for county's public libraries

By Heather Shelton

hshelton@times-standard.com

“Know Your Nonprofits” is a weekly column in the Times-Standard that takes an in-depth look at nonprofit organizations throughout Humboldt County. This week's featured nonprofit is the Humboldt Library Foundation. Elizabeth Murguia, board president, answered the following questions.

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION AND ITS MISSION >> Our motto at the Humboldt Library Foundation is “Open the World.” Our mission is to raise funds to enhance the programs, services and continuing development of Humboldt County's public libraries.

WHEN AND WHY WAS THIS NONPROFIT FOUNDED? >> Founded in 1996, this year HLF celebrates our 25th anniversary! The impetus grew out of the effort to build the main library in Eureka. It took nearly 25 years, but library supporters were generous, persevered against difficult odds, and the doors were finally opened. Emboldened by that community effort, and confident we could raise funds locally to enhance library services and build an endowment, a small band of library supporters formed the Humboldt Library Foundation.

Since 1996, we have been inspired by a simple idea — to open the world of the library for kids and families, for any and all who wish to reach for the treasures within. We have a record of success. Our endowment fund has grown to nearly \$1 million, and over the years we've made direct grants to benefit the library of over \$1.5 million.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION OR THE ISSUES THIS NONPROFIT IS TRYING TO SOLVE? >> Libraries are the heart of a community. With a free library card, you can reach your highest potential, explore the universe or delve into a mystery. Libraries remain the center for lifelong learning and work each day to close the opportunity gap. They lie at the heart of our democracy. The Humboldt County Library system, which includes the main (library) in Eureka, 10 branch libraries and the bookmobile serving 14 outlying communities, is funded primarily through a dedicated property

NONPROFITS » PAGE 3



The Humboldt Library Foundation was founded in 1996. The impetus for its creation grew out of the effort to build the main library in Eureka, pictured.

HEATHER SHELTON — THE TIMES-STANDARD

FROM PAGE 2

tax with local jurisdictions providing facility support. The system is large and reaches into the homes and lives of many county residents. By last count, there were over 110,000 active cardholders and, prior to the pandemic, on average over 500,000 items were checked out annually.

Unfortunately, county funding has not been adequate to fulfill the aspirations of the community, who want more open hours and greater learning opportunities. And frankly, it's not enough to provide for a books and materials budget. That's where the Humboldt Library Foundation has stepped in. We have helped the library acquire thousands of books, audio, and digital materials, purchased computers and software, databases, furniture, funded staff training, and sponsored cultural and education events.

In March, we kicked off a capital campaign to help the library acquire a cargo van. It's an exciting, new initiative and reaches a segment of our community that historically has had difficulties accessing the library. Entitled "Home Delivery: the Library at Your Door," the delivery van will be used to drop off books and materials at the doorstep of seniors, families and individuals with transportation and mobility barriers. To donate, check out our website, <http://humboldtlibraryfoundation.org>, or contact us via email at hlf@humboldt1.com or call 707-269-1991.

WHERE DOES MOST OF THE NONPROFIT'S FUNDING COME FROM? >> All of the support for the Humboldt Library Foundation comes directly from local individuals, businesses, community organizations, and for special projects, other local foundations. From the beginning, it has been a team effort. Hundreds of hours volunteered by current and former board members, community partners, library leadership and staff, book lovers galore, event attendees and auction bidders. Touched by the idea of the public library — the inspiring, the practical, the fanciful and the magical — people have been willing to give.

HOW CAN PEOPLE GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION? >> The needs are great and there are many ways you can help. Let us know if you want to support the library. Check out our website and Facebook page, sign up to receive our newsletter, join the Book a Month Club or make a donation in memory or honor of a loved one. If you share our passion for the idea of the public library, you may want to consider HLF in your estate planning and become a member of the HLF Legacy Circle. Contact our office for additional information.

TELL ME ABOUT A FEW OF YOUR ORGANIZATION'S RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS >> We've recently grantfunded \$94,000 to the library to help purchase more books and materials, replace out of date titles, build up the audiovisual collection for both kids and adults, expand electronic resources (ebooks, etc.), strengthen online data bases, purchase children's furniture for the new Garberville Branch and provide funding towards the new delivery van. Before the year is over we anticipate additional funding requests and the money has been set aside. Last year, we were able to grant \$141,500 to fund similar projects, with special emergency funding to meet the unique needs posed as a result of COVID.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAS THE PANDEMIC CREATED FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION AND HOW HAS THE NONPROFIT DEALT WITH THOSE CHALLENGES? >> Like many during the pandemic, HLF had to reassess its fundraising strategies and in particular, reimagine our annual in-person gala event. We canceled the dinner and auction, but not the purpose and our donors responded generously. As to the mechanics, our (part-time) staff person works remotely and we hold virtual meetings. But overall, our fundraising has been very successful. The community has been generous and has exceeded our expectations.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY FOR PEOPLE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOUR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION? >> Check out our website to sign up for our newsletter, donate or learn more about our organization. Follow us on Facebook for updates on library news and activities, book recommendations and to connect with other library and book lovers.